F SUPERMEN and KIDS WITH DREAMS

A rare interview with the creators of Superman: Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster

Surely one of cartooning's most familiar icons is the Man of Steel. Not only have his costume, person, and trappings entered our cultural consciousness, but the very concept—once revolutionary and now cliched, which if nothing else is the ultimate compliment—is a common element of 20th century fiction.

Disagreement exists among scholars concerning the absolute originality of the Superman ethos. The other precursors are plentiful (Philip Wylie's *Gladiator*, for one); many have even argued a perhaps-subconscious borrowing from the Christian phenomenology. So whether the two young friends from Cleveland created *Superman* in a vacuum is open to question.

But ultimately the question is silly. What Siegel and Shuster wrought, after heartbreaking trials and rejections, succeeded where nobody else had, to a degree nobody else had with many other themes. The empire that has been built on the foundation of the Superman character—the merchandising, the licensing, the books, movies, radio, Broadway, TV shows, the spinoffs—began with two young friends dreaming up a story for the most amateurish of efforts, a primitive fanzine. But the limitations they endured were ignored in favor of the universe they mastered when creating. And whether it was for a few friends via a Mimeograph machine or for the whole world courtesy of a big New York publisher, their dream world persisted—and triumphed. They always knew it would.

Such a tale—recounted in the remarkable interview that follows—should give inspiration to creators everywhere. The creative obsession of Siegel and Shuster, if not their business acumen, is part of the American Dream.

Almost as famous as elements of the Siegel and Shuster saga, and the Superman *œuvre* itself, is the legendary reticence of the two creators to grant interviews. **NEMO** is fortunate to have historian Tom Andrae's history-making, and history-breaking, transcript of conversations with Siegel and Shuster. Here they reveal previously unknown or obscured facts about their unique story.

And, shattering all conventional wisdom—*every* origin story about the Origin—**NEMO** presents a complete reprint of Siegel and Shuster's very first incarnation of the Superman character, from their 1933 fanzine. That he was a bald villain must henceforth be noted in the histories, and not just with an asterisk.

The interview with Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster, and Siegel's wife Joanne was conducted by Tom Andrae, Geoffry Blum, and Gary Coddington. Special thanks to Bob Beerbohm for his assistance.

—Rick Marschall

NEMO: How did the two of you meet?
Joe Shuster: I came from Canada when I was about 10 years old, and our family settled in Cleveland, Ohio. It was in Glenville High School that I met Jerry Siegel; we were both on the staff of the Glenville High paper.
Jerry Siegel: Before that you went to a junior high school...
Shuster: Yes, it was Alexander Hamilton Junior High School, where I was staff artist on their school paper, *The Federalist*. And I did a comic strip called, of all things, *Jerry, the Journalist*. It wasn't influenced by anything in particular; the script was given to me.
Siegel: Strangely enough, it was written by a cousin of mine—he was the editor of the paper. I don't know the details, but when Joe moved from that neighborhood down into the neighborhood where I was living, it was shortly before that I was talking to my cousin—I told him I was interested in comics, and I was starting to collaborate through the mail with some cartoonist—and he told me about Joe. He said that Joe was very good and was moving into my neighborhood and the two of us ought to get together. That's what led to the two of us meeting.
Shuster: We were just a few blocks away from each other, matter of fact. We were about 16 at the time.
Siegel: Something like that. We were high school kids.
NEMO: Was the material in your high school paper your first published artwork?
Shuster: Yes, the first that had ever been published. It was a humorous strip, a cartoon.
Siegel: It was a gag, complete in itself, each separate one.
NEMO: What was the high school like?
Siegel: It was Glenville High School, and while we were students there, there were also some students who in later years achieved considerable celebrity—among them Jerome Lawrence, who later was co-writer of *Inherit the Wind* and *Auntie Mame*. And then Seymour Heller, who was also a student there, later became the manager of Liberace. There were some other fellers who did quite well in later years. Some of them worked on the newspaper.
NEMO: What were your interests at that time besides the high school paper?
Shuster: I tried to build up my body. I was so skinny, I went in for weight-lifting and athletics. I used to get all the body-building magazines—from the second-hand stores—and read them...
Siegel: I used to go to the school gym and see Joe in action: he was pretty good.
Shuster: ... I put a lot of effort into it for about four or five years.
Siegel: Joe, do you mind if I tell a little funny story at your expense?
Shuster: Not about the time in Miami!
Siegel: No, I'm talking about the barbells. Joe was interviewed years ago, and he was really good with the barbells. But newsmen being the way they are, they waited until after Joe had raised and lowered the thing many times. When he put it down and collapsed, that's the picture they wanted: a funny shot instead of all the terrific lifting he had done.
Shuster: Incidentally, Jerry and I did the first science-fiction fanzine, called *Science Fiction*—
Siegel: And here's something of interest which the fan field doesn't know, because the information didn't come fully back to me until just a short time ago. Recently I bought a copy of *The Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction*—the title was something like that; it's published in England. At the front of the book they list certain "firsts"; and they had me down as the publisher of a science-fiction fanzine which I put out several years before I even met Joe. It was called *Cosmic Stories*. It was strictly a typewritten and hectographed publication, I believe; I believe that I wrote most of it or at least a great deal of it. It was sold through the mails, and the article says that not even one copy is known to exist today. This was the first science-fiction fanzine in the U.S., and for all I know, in the whole world. This was when I was about 14 years old, back in 1929, about a year or so before I met Joe. It must be quite a collector's item if any copies exist. It's not impossible that a copy might exist somewhere, but the chances of any other copies having survived is rather remote.
NEMO: Do you recall any of the stories you wrote for that?
Siegel: Yes. As a matter of fact, I even recall that I called the thing The Fantastic Fiction Publishing Company or something like that; and I actually Mimeographed and sold through the mails pamphlets that I wrote under the pseudonym Hugh Langley—or whatever. I don't have copies of those, but I do remember that when I showed the material to my

DOCTOR OCCULT, the Ghost Detective
By LEGER and REUTHS
PASSING AN ALLEY ONE EVENING, HE HEARS A CRY FOR HELP — AND ACTS!
DR. OCCULT, THE "GHOST DETECTIVE" WAS SWORN TO COMBAT SUPER-NATURAL EVIL IN THIS WORLD
A VAMPIRE!
T-THANK YOU! W-WHAT WAS IT?
NEVER MIND. JUST GO HOME AND REST-- HERE'S MY CARD IN THE EVENT YOU SHOULD EVER NEED ME
WHEN THE VICTIM OF THE ATTACK REACHES HOME...
SANDER! YOU'RE PALE! WHAT'S HAPPENED?
NOTHING, DEAR.
BUT THAT NIGHT --
RECEIVING AN URGENT PHONE CALL NEXT MORNING, OCCULT SPEEDS TO SANDER AMSTERS RESIDENCE.
ITS AS I FEARED! THE TWO PIN-PRICKS ON HER THROAT ARE THE MARKS OF A VAMPIRE!
AFTER FIRST PLACING MRS AMSTER UNDER STRICT GUARD IN A PRIVATE SANITARIUM, DR. OCCULT SUBSTITUTES HIS LOVELY ASSISTANT, ROSE PSYCHIC, IN HER BED.
THAT EVENING, HIS TRAP SET, HE WAITS TENSELY IN A CLOSET WHILE MONOTONOUS HOURS DRAG SLOWLY BY.
OCCULT! HELP!
DR. OCCULT'S MAGIC SYMBOL HAS NO EFFECT UPON THE VAMPIRE! — ROSE AND HE ARE AT ITS MERCY!
TO BE CONTINUED
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The pseudonymously written and drawn DOCTOR OCCULT was the first published comic-book work of Siegel and Shuster. The debut episode appeared in *New Fun* #6, dated October, 1935.

SENT TO AN EGYPTIAN TOMB BY A GROUP OF ANCIENT MAGICIANS KNOWN AS "THE SEVEN", ZATOR AND OCCULT HAVE LOCATED THE OBJECT OF THEIR SEARCH, A BELT OF MYSTIC POWERS
AS OCCULT DONS THE BELT HE AND ZATOR ARE ATTACKED BY THE HIRELINGS OF KOTH, ARCH-FOE OF "THE SEVEN"
A SLIGHT TOUCH UPON ONE OF THE BELT'S BUTTONS SENDS THE ASTOUNDED DR OCCULT WHIRLING HELPLESSLY UP INTO THE AIR --
MAJOR TRAPS "BEFORE THE HELPLESS OPPONENT!
OCCULT! TO ME!
HEARING ZATOR'S SHOUT, OCCULT PLUNGES RECKLESSLY DOWN TOWARD HIM KNOWING HOWEVER THAT HE CANNOT ARRIVE IN TIME HIS FINGER HAPPENS TO STRIKE ONE OF THE BUTTONS ON THE BELT...
HE STIFFENED IN MID-AIR, THEN STRUCK THE GROUND AND SMASHED TO BITS!
THE BELT! IT --TURNED HIM TO STONE!
FRIGHTENED AT THEIR COMRADE'S FATE, THE REMAINING ATTACKERS FLEE IN TERROR!

Soon DOCTOR OCCULT was featuring a genuine precursor of Superman—a costumed, caped, flying, red-and-blue suited hero. The villain, Koth, is an alien from a foreign planet where he barely escaped its destruction. The story "Koth and the Seven" ran in *More Fun* #14-17. This story was a thematic dry run for Superman, following the conceptualization, but preceding Superman's first published appearance.

English teacher, she gave me a little lecture that it was a pity I was wasting my time writing such trash when there were so many wonderful types of literature I could be writing instead. And I said, "Well, I like this kind of stuff, and that's why I write it."

Shuster: We were both great science-fiction fans, reading *Amazing Stories* and *Wonder Stories* in those days.

Siegel: When Joe and I met, it was like the right chemicals coming together. I loved his artwork, the stuff that he showed me—and he showed me stuff that he had drawn even years earlier, when he was a teenager, science-fiction stuff. I thought he had the flair—though he was a beginner—I thought he had the flair of a Frank R. Paul, who was one of the best science-fiction illustrators in the field.

Shuster: And I was an avid reader of H.G. Wells—

Siegel: Right. And to our astonishment, we found that both of us were great science-fiction fans, Joe as well as I; and we were both reading the same type of material.

Joanne Siegel: In fact, the three of us were destined to meet, because we were kids all playing at being grown up, trying desperately to be grown up. And since that first day of our friendship, we're still together.

Shuster: Not only that, but when I first met Joe, to my intense delight, he showed me that he was a collector. He was collecting some of the early *Tarzan* pages by Hal Foster, and, later, early *Flash Gordons;* and I found that we were both absolutely interested in the same type of thing. And I was crazy about the artists that he was crazy about, and yet he had this wonderful flair. I didn't know then that some day he would be as famous as those other cartoonists; but I thought, "Gee whiz, I would just love to work with him."

NEMO: *Joe, what was the first artwork of yours that Jerry saw?*

Shuster: That was when I was about 14 years old. I drew a picture on the back of a calendar in pencil. In those days they used to give out free calendars. I had no art paper, so I took whatever else I could. A lot of my work was done on brown wrapping paper and on the back of wallpaper. The drawing Jerry first saw was on the back of a calendar sheet about 14 inches wide by 17 inches long. It showed the world of tomorrow: a beautiful scene of spaceships, rocketships, and futuristic skyscrapers in the city of the future. At the bottom I put my name and the date and "The City of the Future: 1980." That was in 1926 or 1927. It was one of the few things I've ever saved.

Siegel: 1980 seemed like the distant future then.

Shuster: My favorite comic strip in those days was *Little Nemo* by Winsor McCay. It was very imaginative, and that was the sort of fantasy I grew up with and loved.

Siegel: Me, too: I used to love *Little Nemo.* And I remember that when I was a kid, someone had told me how you could rub a printed drawing with a candlewax candle, put it down on a piece of blank paper, and take a heavy object and rub the back of the paper, and the whole thing, color and all, would be transferred. I used to love to do that with the comics, including *Little Nemo,* which was also one of my favorites. This was years before Joe and I met.

Shuster: Also Jerry and I did a comic book together—

Siegel: That was later; it was after we did our fanzine *Science Fiction.* I've already mentioned how in 1929 I put out this fanzine: I definitely wanted to be a science fiction writer. Since I was running into a little trouble in getting other people to go along with my desires and publish my stuff, I began publishing it myself. Then, after I met Joe, we immediately began working on a wide variety of different types of comic strips: funny strips and adventure strips. We did a strip about a cave man and showed it around to the syndicates. That was one of our first collaborations, but not the very first. It wasn't too long after that that *Alley Oop* came out, and we did a double-take. And then another strip that I had done before getting together with Joe—I worked with another artist through the mails—was called *The Time Crusaders.* It was about some fellows who travelled around in a time machine and had adventures in the past and future. I presented it, and not too long after that, *Brick Bradford* came out.

Shuster: One of the first comic strips we ever did together was called *Interplanetary Police.*

Siegel: Right, it was one of our first strips—perhaps the very first. I really can't give you too much detail, except that, as the title suggests, it was about the adventures of the police in the distant future, with the adventures taking place on various worlds. Something funny in connection with it: I submitted it to United Feature Syndicate. Joe and I waited breathlessly. Then one day we got a letter in the mail, and it said United Feature Syndicate on it, and my heart started pounding, and I opened it. There was a real short letter, and the first line was: "Congratulations!" And I thought, "Boy, we've made it." Then

what was the rest of the letter? "This is an interesting strip, but we can't use it"—something like that, which was quite a letdown.

But we did various other strips. We also did a strip about two pals who own some sort of mechanism which enables them to peer anywhere in the world, through walls or anything, and listen in on what gangsters are saying, and then get busy scotching the villainy. In a way, that was a forerunner of Superman's supervision and X-ray vision, only done with a mechanism. I don't remember the title—*Ralph* something.

Another early strip that Joe and I did was called *Snoopy and Smiley*. It was a comedy strip *a la* Laurel and Hardy or Charlie Chaplin or Lord knows what. It didn't sell. Around this time I contacted J. Allen St. John, who had done all the illustrations for the *Tarzan* books; and I worked up with him in my script something called *Rex Carson of the Ether Patrol*. His drawings were very nice. It was submitted around, nothing happened to it, and eventually it just got lost over the years. But then right around this time, Joe and I started our fanzine *Science Fiction*, where I did the first *Superman* story I ever wrote, and Joe did the first Superman illustration that he ever did.

Shuster: It (the magazine) was subtitled "The Advance Guard of Future Civilization."

Siegel: In the third issue of our fanzine I wrote a story called "The Reign of the Superman." I wrote it under the pseudonym of Herbert S. Fine which was a combination of the names of one of my cousins and my mother's maiden name. Joe did the illustrations for it.

Shuster: I did all the illustrations for the magazine, and also for all the other stories.

Siegel: I recall that we did a one-panel cartoon feature in the magazine; it was a sort of "Believe It or Not" of the future called *Queeriosities*.

Shuster: In the magazine we had letters to the editor; we had invited readers to write in—

Siegel: And one of (those readers) was Julius Schwartz, who is currently the editor of *Superman*. And he wrote in, saying some nice things, including the fact that he liked Joe's work. Forrest Ackerman was a contributor—

Joanne Siegel: Of stories?

Shuster: I believe so—I haven't seen the stuff in years. Also, Mort Weisinger and Julius Schwartz I believe collaborated on a sort of science-fiction gossip column which ran in the fanzine; they may have done it under a pseudonym.

NEMO: How did you come up with the idea for "The Reign of the Superman"?

Siegel: Well, as a science-fiction fan, I knew of the various themes in the field. The superman theme has been one of the themes ever since Samson and Hercules; and I just sat down and wrote a story of that type—only in this story, the Superman was a villain.

NEMO: Had you read any stories featuring supermen as villains?

Siegel: If they existed, I didn't know about them. After all, there were tons of things published.

NEMO: The bald-domed, menacing Superman in "The Reign" looks a lot like Lex Luthor, the villain in later Superman stories. Did you consciously base Luthor on the early character?

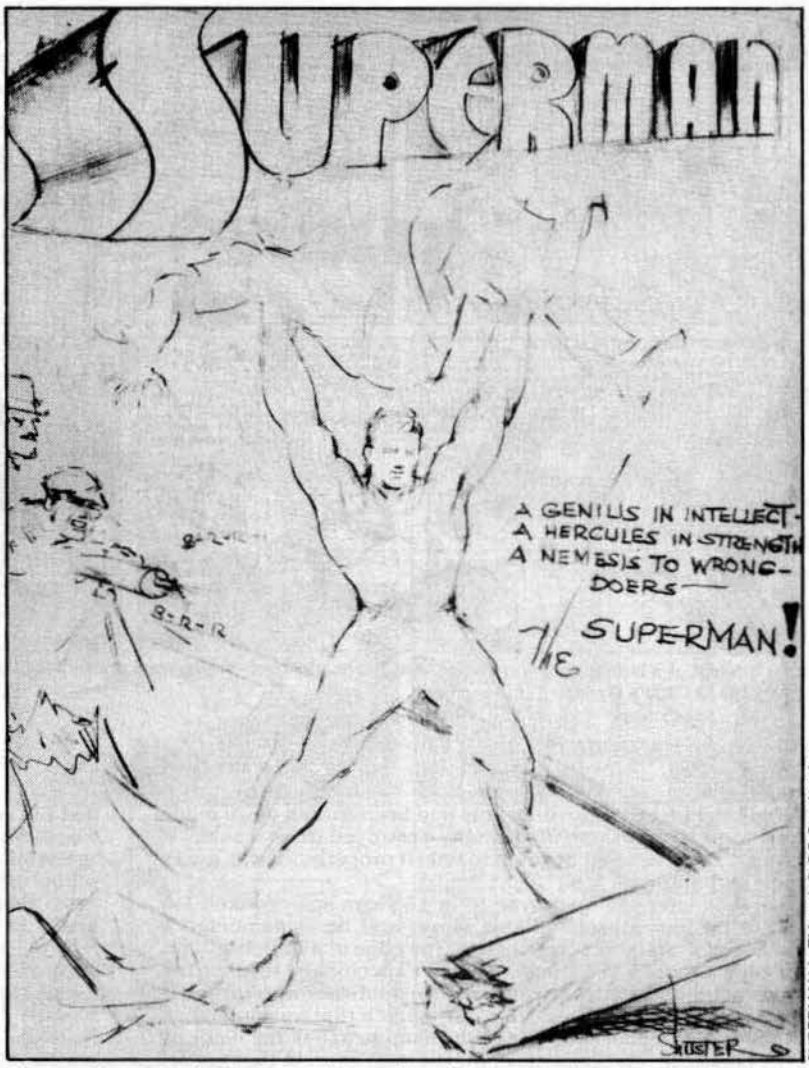
Shuster: The evil Superman was just my idea of a villain—I suppose he looks a lot like Telly Savalas.

NEMO: Did you intend a switch on the traditional Superman theme by making him a villain?

Siegel: No, it wasn't a switch at all: that's just the way I thought that I'd play it. I was just a young kid, and my thoughts didn't go in those directions; that was just the story that occurred to me. That was published in the January 1933 issue of *Science Fiction*. A couple of months after I published this story, it occurred to me that a Superman as a hero rather than a villain might make a great comic strip character in the vein of Tarzan, only more super and sensational than that great character. Joe and I drew it up as a comic book—this was in early 1933. We interested a publisher in putting it out, but then he changed his mind, and that was the end of that particular version of *Superman*—called *The Superman*. Practically all of it was torn up, by the way. Joe got very upset and tore up and threw away most of it.

NEMO: Does any of it still exist?

Shuster: We saved the cover. The rest of the drawings were a crude version of *Superman*. It wasn't really *Superman*: that was before he evolved into a costumed figure. He was simply wearing a T-shirt and pants; he was more like Slam Bradley (another Siegel & Shuster collaboration) than anything else—just a man of action. But we called him *The Superman*. That was the second time we used the name, but the first time it was used for a character of goodwill. I'm a perfectionist, and I



The pencil concept sketch for the first version of Superman—"The Superman" still—in comic-book format, ca. 1933. The interior story is presumably the one Shuster refers to in the interview as destroyed in a fit of disappointment. Note that Superman still is without cape and sports a strongman's outfit.

BUT MADAME--!
STOP HIDING BEHIND THAT TABLOID, REGINALD, AND TELL ME WHY YOU HAD THE BUTLER INFORM ME YOU WERE OUT!
ULP!--I--ER--THAT IS--WELL DASH IT, AUNT LUCY, EVERY TIME YOU BARGE IN ON ME THE WHOLE WORLD GOES TOPSY-TURVY!
SO THAT'S THE GRATITUDE YOU OFFER ME FOR MY ZEAL IN PROTECTING FROM SCHEMERS THE MILLIONS DEAR UNCLE OSCAR LEFT YOU. THAT SETTLES IT! I WASH MY HANDS OF YOU COMPLETELY!
AUNT LUCY! YOU DON'T REALLY MEAN IT? GOSH, THAT'S SWELL--I MEAN GOSH, THAT MAKES ME FEEL TERRIBLE!
AFTER ALL, YOU'RE TWENTY-ONE YEARS OLD, NOT PHYSICALLY DEFORMED, AND NOT COMPLETELY UNINTELLIGENT. SO WHY SHOULD YOU NEED A WOMAN OF MY AGE TO LOOK AFTER YOU?
THAT'S RIGHT--WHY SHOULD I?
CLARICE--YOU CAN COME IN NOW
AND SO I AM RELINQUISHING MY GUARDIANSHIP OF YOU INTO MORE CAPABLE HANDS, --REGINALD, I WANT YOU TO MEET CLARICE WINSTON, YOUR FUTURE WIFE.
HOW DO YOU D--WHAT?
M-MY FUTURE WIFE! BUT AUNT LUCY! THIS GIRL IS A PERFECT STRANGER!
CORRECT! SHE'S A STRANGER TO YOU! AND--SHE'S PERFECT! I PERSONALLY SCRUTINIZED HUNDREDS OF GIRLS, AND IN MY OPINION, OF THEM ALL CLARICE HERE IS THE ONLY ONE FIT TO BEAR THE NAME: VAN TWERP!
SHE COMES OF A GOOD FAMILY, IS A MODEL OF DECORUM, AND IS A NICE, QUIET, OLD-FASHIONED GIRL--JUST THE TYPE I WAS IN MY YOUTH..
("--JUST--LIKE--YOU--WERE!"... BUT AUNT LUCY... I DON'T WANT TO GET MARRIED!
I'M SORRY, REGINALD. IT'S TOO LATE TO BACK OUT NOW! I'VE PROPOSED FOR YOU, AND CLARICE HAS ACCEPTED!
LISTEN! YOU DON'T WANT TO MARRY ME! I SNORE IN MY SLEEP! I'M ABSOLUTELY REPULSIVE!
OO-OO!--HOW ADORABLE!
CAN'T YOU SEE THE CHILD HAS FALLEN COMPLETELY, MADLY, HOPELESSLY IN LOVE WITH YOU AT FIRST SIGHT? AND YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BREAK HER DELICATE HEART, WOULD YOU?
NO...I'D RATHER BREAK HER NECK--OH, I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE IN NOW RATHER THAN LATER... YOU ALWAYS HAVE YOUR WAY WITH ME INEVITABLY, ANYWAY, YET, YES: I'LL MARRY THIS GIRL!

An attempt at a humor strip was *Reggie van Twerp*, obviously written and drawn in Al Capp's early style; the promotion sheet for the strip even paid homage to Capp's style.

think the fact that the drawings had been turned down made me want to tear them up. I simply destroyed them. I said, "If we ever do it again, I'm going to redo it properly." It was a very low period for us.

Siegel: In later years—maybe 10 or 15 years ago—I asked Joe what he remembered of this story, and he remembered a scene of a character crouched on the edge of a building, with a cape almost *a la* Batman. We don't specifically recall if the character had a costume or not. The publisher who turned it down published *Detective Dan*. The sketch that was published in Steranko's book was one of the sketches that Joe made at that time for this story—to show the publisher. In that particular sketch, the character is not in costume; but Joe and I —especially Joe—seem to recall that there were some scenes in there in which the character had a bat-like cape.

NEMO: What was your reason for changing Superman from a villain to a hero?

Siegel: Obviously, having him a hero would be infinitely more commercial than having him a villain. I understand that the comic strip *Dr. Fu Manchu* ran into all sorts of difficulties because the main character was a villain. And with the example before us of Tarzan and other action heroes of fiction who were very successful, mainly because people admired them and looked up to them, it seemed the sensible thing to do to make *The Superman* a hero. The first piece was a short story, and that's one thing; but creating a successful comic strip with a character you'll hope will continue for many years, it would definitely be going in the wrong direction to make him a villain.

NEMO: Was "The Superman" conceived as a strip or a comic book?

Siegel: It was conceived strictly as a comic book. It was intended to take up the entire publication. When Joe and I first got together, we did attempt to prepare and sell newspaper strips; but they failed to sell. When I saw this publication *Detective Dan*, it occurred to me that we could get up an even more interesting comic book character than that other strip, which seemed to be a takeoff on *Dick Tracy*.

NEMO: Wasn't there a Popeye-like character with great strength that you created very early, before Superman?

Siegel: We really didn't do much of anything with that. It was a series of little short stories I wrote which ran in my high school paper. Joe and I made little sketches for it, but we never really did much with it. That was *Goober, the Mighty*; it was *a la Popeye*, but it was satirical. Of course, we liked Popeye—especially the animated cartoons, which had a strong influence on me in the writing—and possibly Joe, too, for all I know...

Shuster: Yes.

Siegel: ... because the super-strength and action in the animated cartoons, rather than in the comic strip, were absolutely sensational. I thought: this is really great, but it's done strictly as comedy. What if it featured a straight adventure character? You could end up with a very dynamic adventure strip. So that was one of the influences on *Superman*. There were many: there was Tarzan, who was the greatest action hero of the time, and various others; but I think the Popeye animated cartoons were one of the strongest influences.

NEMO: You said at one time that you did a Tarzan satire.

Siegel: That was it—*Goober, the Mighty* took place in the jungle and kind of kidded the Tarzan theme. A lot of our early work was humorous.

Shuster: We even did a Laurel and Hardy comic strip, a few sample daily strips, but it was never published. I was really a cartoonist, and I had no idea what we'd be going into. I loved illustration, but I was essentially—I had a flair for comedy.

Siegel: We both loved the comic strips; it just so happened that the adventure stuff was what we managed to market, and that's what we did from there on.

Shuster: Yeah.

NEMO: What sort of comedy strips did you enjoy at that time?

Siegel: I enjoyed *Li'l Abner*; that was a strong influence on me.

Shuster: Alex Raymond and Burne Hogarth were my idols —also Milt Caniff, Hal Foster, and Roy Crane. But the movies were the greatest influence on our imagination: especially the films of Douglas Fairbanks Senior.

Siegel: I read tremendous amounts of pulps; and Joe and I, we practically lived in movie theaters—

Shuster: Jerry picked up the technique of visualizing the story as a movie scenario; and whenever he gave me a script, I would see it as a screenplay. That was the technique that Jerry used, and I just picked it up.

NEMO: Had you had a chance to see professionally written screenplays?

Siegel: Not at all. As a matter of fact, when we broke into the field, we both indulged in what we thought was very experimental stuff. In the writing, I tried to incorporate what was so popular in the pulp field into the comics field. I used a great number of captions along with dialogue balloons, visualizing the way a pulp comic should be. I feel now that we were pioneering, and that much of the stuff that followed was influenced by the way we handled our very early work, like *Slam Bradley*, especially.

Slam Bradley was a dry run for Superman. *Superman* had already been created, and we didn't want to give away the *Superman* idea; but we just couldn't resist putting into *Slam Bradley* some of the slambang stuff which we knew would be in *Superman* if and when we got *Superman* launched.

NEMO: Where did Slam Bradley come from?

Shuster: Oh, that's a very important part of our lives, a very important part of our background. Jerry often says that *Slam Bradley* was really the forerunner of *Superman*, because we turned it out with no restrictions, complete freedom to do what we wanted; the only problem was that we had a deadline. We had to work very fast, so Jerry suggested that we save time by putting less than six panels to a page: four panels or three panels, and sometimes two panels. I think one day we just had one panel to a page. The kids loved it because it was spectacular: I could do so much more. Later on, the editors stopped us from doing that; they said the kids were not getting their money's worth.

The actual character of Slam Bradley was Jerry's idea. They wanted an action strip, and Jerry came up with the idea of a man of action with a sense of humor. The character had a devil-may-care attitude very much like that of Fairbanks Senior's *Zorro*. Still, he couldn't fly, and he didn't have a costume.

SLAM BRADLEY
IN THE COURSE OF ONE OF THEIR ROUTINE CASES, SLAM AND SHORTY, FALL INTO A TRAP FROM WHICH THERE APPEARS TO BE NO ESCAPE. BESET BY OVERWHELMING ODDS THEY APPEAR TO BE DOOMED, UNTIL
JEROME SIEGEL — JOE SHUSTER
WHAM
-- BEHIND THE FIGHTING MEN THERE COMES THE SOUND OF A BURST OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE.
RAT-T-T TAT!
THROW UP YOUR HANDS, ALL OF YOU! -- SLAM, SHORTY, COME HERE!
THANKS FOR THE MACHINE-GUN!
HERE IS MY CARD. -- I SHALL BE EXPECTING YOU TO NIGHT AT 8:00 P.M. AT WHICH TIME, I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.
BUT HOW, WHO--
THAT EVENING... AS THEY MAKE THEIR WAY TOWARD THEIR RESCUER'S RESIDENCE...
THOSE CROOKS ARE SAFELY WHERE THEY BELONG BUT WHAT ABOUT THIS PROFESSOR KENTON? HOW COME HE MANAGED TO SHOW UP AT THE NICK OF TIME?
WE'LL SOON KNOW.

Rather crude was the early collaboration *Slam Bradley* when Siegel was still "Jerome."

NEMO: When you first conceived Superman, did you have the dual-identity theme in mind?

Siegel: That occurred to me in late 1934, when I decided that I'd like to do *Superman* as a newspaper strip. I approached Joe about it, and he was enthusiastic about the possibility. I was up late one night, and more and more ideas kept coming to me, and I kept writing out several weeks of syndicate scripts for the proposed newspaper strip. When morning came, I had written several weeks of material, and I dashed over to Joe's place and showed it to him. (This was the story that appeared in *Action Comics* #1, June, 1938, the first published appearance of *Superman*.)

Shuster: That was one very important day in our lives. We just sat down, and I worked straight through. I think I had brought in some sandwiches to eat, and we worked all day long.

Siegel: Of course, Joe had worked on that earlier version of *Superman*, and when I came to him with this new version of it, he was immediately sold. And when I saw the drawings that were emerging from his pencil I almost flipped. I knew he had matured a great deal since he had done *The Superman*, and I thought he was doing a great job on the new art.

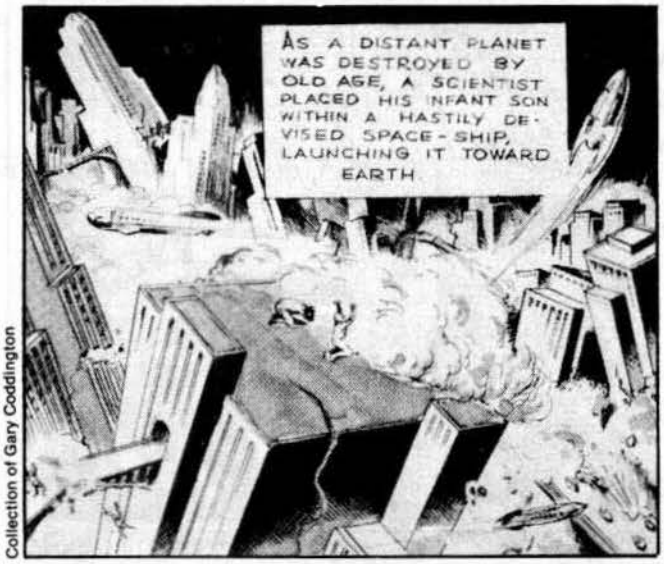
Shuster: I was caught up in Jerry's enthusiasm, and I started drawing as fast as I could use my pencil. My imagination just picked the concept right up from Jerry.

Siegel: You see, Clark Kent grew not only out of my private life, but also out of Joe's. As a high school student, I thought that some day I might become a reporter, and I had crushes on several attractive girls who either didn't know I existed or didn't care I existed. As a matter of fact, some of them looked like they *hoped* I didn't exist. It occurred to me: What if I was real terrific? What if I had something special going for me, like jumping over buildings or throwing cars around or something like that? Then maybe they would notice me. That night when all the thoughts were coming to me, the concept came to me that Superman could have a dual identity, and that in one of his identities he could be meek and mild, as I was, and wear glasses, the way I do. The heroine, who I figured would be a girl reporter, would think he was some sort of a worm; yet she would be crazy about this Superman character who could do all sorts of fabulous things. In fact, she was real wild about him, and a big inside joke was that the fellow she was crazy about was also the fellow whom she loathed. By coincidence, Joe was a carbon copy (of me).

Shuster: I was mild-mannered, wore glasses, was very shy with women.

Siegel: So in the artwork, he was able to translate it; and he wasn't just drawing it, he was feeling it.

NEMO: Did heroes like Zorro have any influence on the dual-identity motif?


AS A DISTANT PLANET WAS DESTROYED BY OLD AGE, A SCIENTIST PLACED HIS INFANT SON WITHIN A HASTILY DE-VISED SPACE-SHIP, LAUNCHING IT TOWARD EARTH

Collection of Gary Coddington

Siegel: Definitely. I loved *The Mark of Zorro*, and I'm sure that had some influence on me. I did also see *The Scarlet Pimpernel* but didn't care much for it. But the shy reporter with glasses came out of our own personal lives. Of course we loved Douglas Fairbanks as Robin Hood, and that influenced both of us: me in the writing, and Joe in the art. I'm sure that subliminally we remembered Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik*, and the tremendous romantic appeal to women of a guy in costume.

NEMO: Yet, the early Superman avoided women.

Siegel: Yes. I figured that the character would be so advanced that he would be invulnerable in other ways than physically. Secretly, I kind of enjoyed the thought that women, who just didn't care at all about somebody like Clark Kent, would go ape over somebody like Superman. I enjoyed the fact that he wasn't that affected by all their admiration. When you come down to it, some of the greatest lovers of all time simply aren't that crazy about women: It's the women who are crazy about them. Clark Gable was hard to get, and so were some of the other romantic heroes.

NEMO: So Superman was conceived as being like the ideal Hollywood romantic hero of the time?

Siegel: That's right.

NEMO: Joanne, when you first saw the Superman character, did you feel about him the way Jerry and Joe thought girls would?

Joanne Siegel: I thought Superman was terrific. Joe showed me the drawing, and I was taken by it immediately. I thought that this was really different; and that Jerry had a terrific idea, and Joe's drawings brought it to life. I was thrilled to have even a small part in the project.

When I met them I was struck by Joe's age. We met during the Great Depression. I was just a teenager, and my father was out of work; so in order to have any spending money, I had to earn my own money. I found that no one would hire me because I had no skills or training, and even grown people were having trouble getting jobs. I had read an article about modeling, and I thought maybe I could get away with that. So I practiced various poses in front of a mirror, and I put an ad in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in the Situation Wanted column, advertising myself as a model, and Joe happened to see it. We corresponded, and he signed all his letters "Mr. Joseph Shuster," so I thought he was an older man. We set up an appointment at his apartment, where he lived with his parents, brother, and sister. I went there on a Saturday afternoon because I was going to school during the week. I was so nervous, because I thought he was going to say I was too young.

It was a freezing cold day, and I was absolutely frozen by the time I got there, because I lived on the other side of town. I pounded on the door; and it opened a little bit, and I saw a young boy on the other side, and I said, "I'm the model that Mr. Shuster is expecting." He said, "Come on in," and we got to talking. I asked if I could leave my coat on, because I was still cold. Right away we got excited, we were talking about not only the weather but movies and everything. Finally I said, "Does Mr. Shuster know that I'm here?" And he said, "I'm Mr. Shuster." That was the way we met.

We went in the back, and I posed for him that day; I posed for him every Saturday after that. When I came out to the living room, Jerry was waiting to meet me, because he knew I was going to be coming. I was absolutely astounded with his energy—talk about super-energy! He was sitting on a chair, his feet were going, he was flipping through magazines, anxiously waiting to meet me. [To Jerry:] You made a shambles of that house... We hit it off just great. Then we found that we had all been on our school papers, so we felt that we had a real common bond there. I was at a different school, but I had been on my school paper, and I had wanted to be a girl reporter; so I was very thrilled that I was posing as a girl reporter. We've been together ever since.

NEMO: And you dated Jerry?

Shuster: I started dating her first.

Joanne Siegel: Right. We dated first...

Siegel: I was just a bystander.

Joanne Siegel: ... and many years later, Jerry and I and Joe had a reunion at the Hotel Plaza in New York at a great cartoonists' ball.

Siegel: It was a costume ball. Tell them who you came as.

Joanne Siegel: I came as Dixie Dugan, because I had my hair exactly like hers at that time. Joe took me down to the Brooks costume company and rented an enormous ballgown for me, so I looked exactly like Dixie Dugan. Jerry and Joe were having problems at that time—there was litigation—and I just didn't feel like going as Lois Lane under those circumstances. But Lois Lane also wore her hair that way, remember? After this reunion at the ball, Jerry and I started dating, and a few months later, we were married. That was in 1948.

An early attempt at the Superman origin, one of apparently several syndicate submissions. This effort is neither the same art refashioned for the first issue of *Action Comics* nor the daily newspaper strip as it ultimately appeared. The shading is by Craftint paper, a technical advance that was developed in the creator's native Cleveland, Ohio.

WHEN CLARK KENT THE BABE, GREW TO MATURITY HE DISCOVERED HE COULD EASILY HURDLE A TWENTY STORY BUILDING, LEAP 1/4TH OF A MILE, RAISE UNBELIEVABLE WEIGHTS, RUN FASTER THAN AN EXPRESS TRAIN, AND THAT NOTHING LESS THAN A BURSTING SHELL COULD PENETRATE HIS SKIN
EARLY, CLARK DECIDED HE MUST TURN HIS TITANIC STRENGTH INTO CHANNELS THAT WOULD BENEFIT MANKIND
AND SO WAS CRE-ATED...
SUPERMAN!
CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED, THE PHYSICAL MARVEL WHO HAD SWORN TO DEVOTE HIS EXISTENCE TO HELPING THOSE IN NEED!

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Collection of Charlie Roberts

Photo by Joseph Kulik

An early pencil portrait, rather romanticized, of Lois Lane. The photo is of Joanne Carter Siegel on the beach in Santa Monica, ca. 1938, a few years after first posing for Joe Shuster.

NEMO: How did Lois Lane come about?

Joanne Siegel: Joe was redrawing the strip, and it was going to be more realistic, rather than cartoony. I used to model for him every Saturday until he had enough drawings. He made so many stock drawings that it got to a point where he didn't need any more.

Shuster: To me she was Lois Lane.

Joanne Siegel: We became such good friends by that time we decided we would always stay friends. I did a lot of travelling but kept in touch with Joe; we corresponded. I did a lot of modeling in Boston after that, but the job with Joe was my first modeling job. I posed for a lot of painters and illustrators in Boston and Provincetown and New York—and some photographers in New York. I never did fashion modeling; I never was tall enough. I wanted to grow more, but this is as high as I got.

NEMO: Did you have a chance to make suggestions about Lois Lane in the early stages?

Joanne Siegel: No, I had no part in that at all. Jerry thought of Lois Lane long before I came on the scene.

Joe Shuster: She was a great inspiration for me, though. She encouraged me, she was very enthusiastic about the strip; it meant a lot to me.

Joanne Siegel: Many times he used to write to me and say that he was about to give up on it; and I'd say, Keep at it and you'll make it. I had such a feeling about the strip and about them. I told him, "You're going to be very famous some day." But Jerry was the brains behind Lois. People get the word model confused: there's the model that's an inspiration and the model that poses. I was the model that posed; he thought of Lois Lane before I came on the scene.

NEMO: Joe, did you have any male models for Superman or Clark as you did for Lois?

Shuster: No, he was just inspired by many of the heroes in fiction and the classics. And of course, I was inspired by the movies. In the silent films, my hero was Douglas Fairbanks Senior, who was very agile and athletic. So I think he might have been an inspiration to us, even in his attitude. He had a stance which I often used in drawing Superman. You'll see in many of his roles—including Robin Hood—that he always stood with his hands on his hips and his feet spread apart, laughing—taking nothing seriously. Clark Kent, I suppose, had a little bit of Harold Lloyd in him.

NEMO: The stance of laughing at evil is more characteristic of the early Superman, who toys with crooks and suspends them from telephone wires.

Shuster: That's the one I drew. Jerry and I always felt that the character was enjoying himself. He was having fun: he wasn't taking himself seriously. It was always a lark for him, as you can see in my early drawings.

NEMO: Where did Superman's costume come from?

Shuster: It was inspired by the costume pictures that Fairbanks did: they greatly influenced us. He did *The Mark of Zorro*, and *Robin Hood*, and a marvelous one called *The Black Pirate*—those are three that I recall that we loved. Fairbanks would swing on ropes very much like Superman flying—or like Tarzan on a vine.

Before I ever put anything on paper, Jerry and I would talk back and forth. Jerry would say, "Well, how about this, or how about that, or how about doing him like this?" And I agreed the feeling of action as he was flying or jumping or leaping—a flowing cape would give it movement. It really helped, and it was very easy to draw.

I also had classical heroes and strongmen in mind, and this shows in the footwear. In the third version Superman wore sandals laced halfway up the calf. You can still see this on the cover of *Action* #1, though they were covered over in red to look like boots when the comic was printed.

NEMO: Who came up with the "S" insignia, and how many versions did it go through?

Shuster: Jerry and I discussed it in detail. We said, "Let's put something on the front." I think initially we wanted to use the first letter of the character's name. We thought S was perfect. After we came up with it, we kiddingly said, "Well, it's the first letter of Siegel and Shuster." Progressively, as the strip evolved, the emblem became larger and larger; you'll notice at the beginning it was quite small.

NEMO: It was almost a more simple triangle at the beginning, wasn't it?

Shuster: Actually, it was made like a shield. I can't describe it, but I was thinking of what they call a crest. Yes, I had a heraldic crest in the back of my mind when I made it. It was a little fancy triangle with curves at the top.

Collection of Gary Coddington

Siegel (left) and Shuster (right) in a publicity photo in connection with a Bond Drive, ca. World War II.

NEMO: Did you foresee the merchandising possibilities inherent in Superman?

Siegel: One day, I read an article in some leading magazine of the time about how Tarzan was merchandised by Stephen Slesinger so successfully. And I thought: Wow! Superman is even more super than Tarzan; the same thing could happen with *Superman*. And I mentioned it to Joe, he got real enthused, and I walked in a day to two later, and he had made a big drawing of Superman showing how the character could be merchandised on boxtops, T-shirts, and everything. We put this merchandising business into one of the very early Superman stories. The publisher looked at it and thought it was a good idea, and Superman has been a terrific earner from character merchandising ever since.

Shuster: In this drawing we just let our imagination run wild. We visualized Superman toys, games, and a radio show—that was before TV—and Superman movies. We even visualized Superman billboards. And it's all come true.

NEMO: How did you name the Superman characters?

Shuster: Jerry created all the names. We were great movie fans, and were inspired a lot by the actors and actresses we saw. As for Clark Kent, he combined the names of Clark Gable and Kent Taylor. And Metropolis, the city in which Superman operated, came from the Fritz Lang movie, which we both loved.

NEMO: What led you to make Superman a visitor from another planet?

Shuster: Jerry reversed the usual formula of the superhero who goes to another planet. He put the superhero in ordinary, familiar surroundings, instead of the other way around, as was done in most science fiction. That was the first time I can recall that it had ever been done.

NEMO: Were you influenced by the Edgar Rice Burroughs John Carter of Mars stories?

Siegel: I don't think they had much of an influence on me when I wrote *The Reign of the Superman*. However, when I did the version in 1934, [which years later, in 1938, was published, in revised form, in *Action Comics* #1] the *John Carter* stories did influence me. Carter was able to leap great distances because the planet Mars was smaller that the planet Earth; and he had great strength. I visualized the planet Krypton as a huge planet, much larger than Earth; so whoever came to Earth from that planet would be able to leap great distances and lift great weights.

NEMO: Initially Superman only leapt great distances. How did his flying evolve?

Shuster: He was mostly leaping tall buildings in the beginning. There were cases where he would leap off a tall building or swoop down, and at that point he would look like he was flying, I suppose. It was just natural to draw him like that.

NEMO: Some critics claim that Superman first flew in the animated cartoons, and that this influenced you to make the comic-book character fly.

Shuster: Not that I recall.

NEMO: How did you do the artwork for the Superman story published in Action #1?

Shuster: I think we did the roughs in pencil, then transferred them to other paper.

Siegel: He was a very meticulous worker. This was in the days when he didn't have to turn out tons of work, so he had the time to put his best efforts into it. In later years, he was absolutely swamped with work and had trouble with his eyes.

Shuster: Somebody once pointed out to me that it was so meticulous. It had to be, because I couldn't see: I had to get down to about an inch above the paper in order to see the fine lines.

Siegel: That's true: his head was very close to the paper. And on top of that, his family had financial problems, and his apartment in Cleveland didn't have heat. Joe would be working often wearing gloves, and several sweaters, and a jacket or two—he was working under that handicap, on top of his vision problems.

Shuster: *Action* #1 was taken directly from the newspaper strip: It was pasted up. They were in a rush to meet the deadline on the first issue. Everything happened very fast: they made the decision to publish it and said to us, "Just go out and turn out 13 pages based on your strip." It was a rush job, and one of the things I like least to do is to rush my artwork. I'm too much of a perfectionist to do anything which is mediocre. The only solution Jerry and I could come up with was to cut up the strips into panels and paste the panels on a sheet the size of the page. If some panels were too long, we would shorten them—cut them off—if they were too short, we would extend them. You see, some of the panels were extended to fit the size of the page; it was quite an art job.

NEMO: How did this art compare with the drawings for "The Superman" which you tore up?

Shuster: Those early sketches looked too cartoony; I really wanted to do detailed drawings—I was taking anatomy classes—but unfortunately I wasn't able to do it because of the time

SUPERMAN
JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER
FAR FROM EARTH ROTATED THE PLANET KRYPTON WHOSE HIGHLY EVOLVED INHABITANTS WERE CAPABLE OF INCREDIBLE FEATS OF STRENGTH . . LEAPING GREAT HEIGHTS AND DISTANCES . . LIFTING AND SMASHING MIGHTY WEIGHTS . . POSSESSING IMPENETRABLE SKINS . . .
AS THIS AMAZING PLANET ERUPTED, A SCIENTIST LAUNCHED HIS INFANT SON TOWARD EARTH IN A SPACE SHIP!
THE SLEEPING BABE IS RESCUED FROM THE BURNING SPACE SHIP BY A PASSING MOTORIST, AND TURNED OVER TO AN ORPHAN ASYLUM . . .
GOOD HEAVENS! IT'S A CHILD!
ATTENDANTS, UNAWARE THE CHILD'S PHYSICAL STRUCTURE IS MILLIONS OF YEARS ADVANCED OF THEIR OWN, ARE ASTOUNDED AT HIS FEATS OF STRENGTH!
WHEN MATURITY WAS REACHED, CLARK KENT DISCOVERED HE COULD EASILY LEAP 1/8 MI. OR A MILE . . HURDLE A TWENTY STORY BUILDING . . RAISE TREMENDOUS WEIGHTS . . . RUN FASTER THAN AN EXPRESS TRAIN . . AND THAT NOTHING LESS THAN A BURSTING SHELL COULD PENETRATE HIS SKIN!
--INCREDIBLE? NO! FOR EVEN TODAY ON OUR WORLD EXIST CREATURES WITH SUPER-STRENGTH!
THE LOWLY ANT CAN SUPPORT WEIGHTS HUNDREDS OF TIMES ITS OWN
THE GRASSHOPPER LEAPS WHAT TO MAN WOULD BE THE SPACE OF SEVERAL CITY BLOCKS
AND SO SUPERMAN WITH HIS EXTRAORDINARY POWERS, VOWS TO DEVOTE HIS EXISTENCE TO HELPING THOSE IN NEED!
I MUST BECOME A REPORTER--GET NEWS FLASHES PROMPTLY--SO I WILL ALWAYS BE ON TIME TO HELP!
AND SO IS DETERMINED A DECISION FATED TO CHANGE THE DESTINY OF A NORLD
!
CLARK KENT MILD-MANNERED PLANET REPORTER
SUPERMAN CHAMPION OF THE HELPLESS AND OPPRESSED
ONE AND SAME!
HOLD ME TIGHT!--I'M AFRAID!
I'LL BE DELIGHTED!
SUPERMAN RESCUES LOIS, THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL REPORTER!
SUPERMAN FOILS THE ATTEMPTED ESCAPE OF FUGITIVE GANGSTERS!
COME AND GET IT!
SUPERMAN SAVES A TOWN FROM MERCILESS BOMBARDMENT!
SUPERMAN
MAN OF STEEL
follow HIS STARTLING ADVENTURES featuring NEXT SUNDAY
DON'T MISS IT!
SUPERMAN is TM and © DC Comics, Inc.

Superman finally leaps into the Sunday pages of American newspapers.

element. We had to turn the stuff out like a factory. Sometimes I wanted to sit down and spend an hour or two on one drawing, but it wasn't possible. I had to produce a complete page—or two or three—in one day. I took a lot of pride in my work, and I hated to do a mediocre job. Evidently, some of the writers enjoyed my work best of all for that very reason. I think Jules Feiffer called it crude. At the same time, he said it came to life. It was not polished. Some of the early drawings were very well drawn, and in great detail, because I had plenty of time to work on each panel. Later I was able to capture the action scenes very well, but I just didn't have time to put in all details, the polishing.

Jules Feiffer also mentioned something which no one has never mentioned before: He said that one reason the kids loved my Superman artwork so much was the fact that it was almost like something they would draw. They could identify with that kind of drawing. I won't say that it was childlike, but I took Feiffer's remark as a compliment. He didn't denigrate my work.

NEMO: Were there any editorial restrictions placed on the early Superman comic strips?

Shuster: In the beginning, we had a great deal of freedom, and Jerry wrote completely out of his imagination—very, very freely. We even had no editorial supervision to speak of, because they were in such a rush to get the thing in before deadline. But later on we were restricted.

NEMO: How much of the Superman art did you do?

Shuster: I did all the work at the beginning up until the point where I couldn't handle the increasingly heavy art production burden alone. I needed and got assistance.

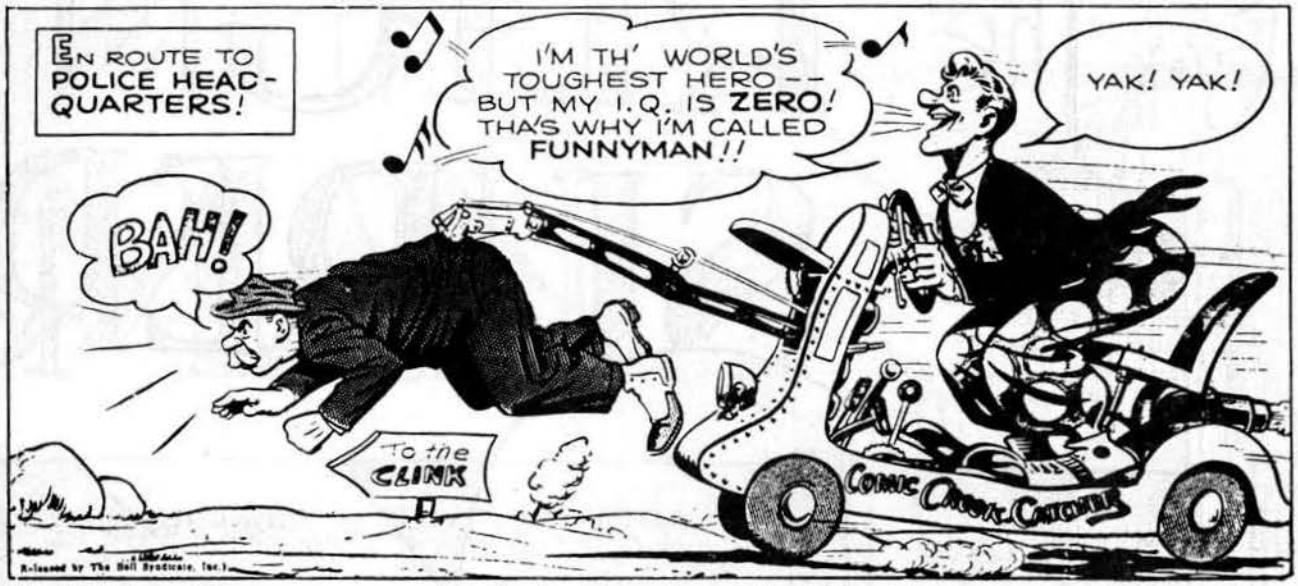
NEMO: Who was the first artist you hired?

Shuster: So much time has passed that it would be difficult for us to accurately answer that question. At that time, the strip was sold to the McClure Syndicate. As time went on, I had quite a production staff, but I was already involved in the drawing. Not all of the aspects of it, but I was involved in the initial layouts, the pencilling; and I did all the faces of Superman, every one of them—which was very tedious, because Jerry insisted (and I agreed with him) that there was nobody else that could really catch the spirit, the feeling, of Superman. I did all the figures, too, as a matter of fact. My staff did mainly the backgrounds and the inking, the polishing up of the pencilling—because a lot of my pencils were quite rough. But they were very spontaneous. What I did was get the initial action of the figure, and they would go on from there. The one thing they did not ink was Superman's face. For about an eight- or 10-year period, I did every face of Superman.

NEMO: What was your and Jerry's method of working before Superman required a productions staff?

Shuster: We worked very closely. At the beginning, he would sit down next to me at the drawing board. We would sit side by side: it was a real collaboration. He would have his script, and he would describe the scene to me. First he would read the scene to me, and I would absorb it and visualize it. And he'd say, "That's just what I had in mind" or "Let's make a few changes here." He would even describe the positions of Superman he wanted and how the character would act; it was almost like a movie scenario. He did almost everything except draw it—he really visualized everything for me, and I picked it up.

Jerry was one of the first I can remember—at least in the comic books—who really used the style of a screen writer. He


EN ROUTE TO POLICE HEAD-QUARTERS!
I'M TH' WORLD'S TOUGHEST HERO -- BUT MY I.Q. IS ZERO! THA'S WHY I'M CALLED FUNNYMAN!!
YAK! YAK!
BAH!
To the CLINK
COMIC CHEESE CATCHER
Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.

San Francisco Academy of Comic Art

A fragment of an early *Funnyman* newspaper strip by Siegel and Shuster; the concept was obviously humorous, a preoccupation that was never really far from Siegel and Shuster's work through the years.

would describe each scene, and the shot used—long shot, medium, close-up, overhead shot. It was marvelous. I guess he evolved the technique for himself, because we were both movie buffs. He would study the techniques of the movie serials, but he never saw a written screenplay.

NEMO: What influence did you have on the portrayal of Superman in other media—the Max Fleischer cartoons, for instance?

Shuster: It was purely accidental. I was just down in Miami for a visit, and somebody who knew me said, "How would you like to come down and visit the Studios?" I said, "Yeah, I'd love to see them doing *Superman*." They were just starting on it. I went down there, and I was fascinated with it. And I suggested, "I wouldn't mind drawing some shots for you showing how Superman looks in side view, front view, three-quarter view; how Clark Kent would look, and Lois Lane would look." They said, Fine; they'd love to have me do it. So I just sat down and spent a couple of days there drawing model sheets. I loved doing it, and I loved being involved in it. And we were lucky enough to receive a credit line on the cartoons afterwards.

NEMO: Were you involved in the radio show much?

Shuster: No, not really. Jerry may have been consulted about some of the initial scripts. But I remember meeting Bud Collyer, who played Superman. I think the show was very well done.

NEMO: Did you ever watch any filming of the TV show?

Shuster: No, but I met some of the cast later on. Several years ago we had a reunion and were interviewed on one of the stations in Los Angeles—Channel 13. We did an hour show, and I met the girl who played Lois Lane—Noel Neill—and Jack Larson (Jimmy Olsen).

NEMO: Did you and Jerry have any part in casting the Superman movie?

Shuster: That would have been great, but we were never approached as to who would play what part—but I had certain people in mind. One of the people I had in mind for newspaper editor Perry White was the fellow who played Lou Grant: Ed Asner. He was marvellous as a newspaper editor.

NEMO: But you've met the stars of the film.

Jerry: Yes, at the Los Angeles premiere. I thought that Christopher Reeve was great as Superman. He really captured the sense of humor that Joe and I intended the early character to have.

NEMO: What do you think has made Superman so popular for over 40 years?

Siegel: If you're interested in what made *Superman* what it is, here's one of the keys to what made it universally acceptable. Joe and I had certain inhibitions...which led to wish-fulfillment which we expressed through our interest in science fiction and our comic strip. That's where the dual-identity concept came from, and Clark Kent's problems with Lois. I imagine there are a lot of people in this world who are similarly frustrated. Joe and I both felt that way in high school, and he was able to put the feeling into sketches.

Joanne Siegel: Most teenage boys have disappointments with girls...

Shuster: True! That's why I say it's a universal theme, and that's why so many people could relate to it.

Joanne Siegel: That's why love songs are so popular: they're all full of passion for someone who doesn't care about the singer.

Siegel: There's one other comment that I would like to add before we close. It has been very frustrating for Joe and me to have been off the character that we originated and loved for so many years. We are grateful that, in our senior years—we're both almost 69—that the corporation which owns Superman is treating us well.

Joanne Siegel: We have a good relationship with DC and Warner's.

The following portfolio is a reprint of the 1933 fanzine story by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster featuring their first conceptual manifestation of the Superman character. It has been retyped to salvage legibility, but the artwork—and the original text—has been preserved exactly. The young creators reportedly used their school's mimeograph machine to run off their somewhat pretentiously titled magazine—*SCIENCE FICTION, The Advance Guard of Future Civilization*. The issue is written and illustrated almost entirely by Siegel and Shuster (the author of "The Reign of the Superman" is a pseudonym for Siegel), except for some writing by Forrest J. Ackerman, and a letter to the editor from Julius Schwartz, later editor of Superman Comics! In bizarre fashion, Ackerman appears as a character in the seminal story. The fanzine is the third issue of *SCIENCE FICTION*, and is dated January, 1933.